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OBSERVATIONS ON A LETTER

ADDRESSED BY

G. W. DES VOEUX, Esq.

(Late Stipendiary Magistrate in British Guiana),



TO THE

RIGHT HON. EARL GRANVILLE, K.G.,

BY

SIR FRANCIS HINCKS, K.C.M.G., C.B.

(Late Governor of British Guiana).



OTTAWA :

PRINTED BY L. B. TAYLOR, 29, 31, AND 33, RIDEAU STREET.

1870.

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G. W. DES VŒUX, Esq.,

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Several weeks have elapsed since I received a copy of Mr. Des Vœux's letter to Earl Granville, which contains very grave charges against myself, as well as against various public functionaries, and the planters generally in British Guiana, of which colony I was Governor, from the beginning of the year 1862, until the latter end of January, 1869. Being aware that Earl Granville had determined on investigating Mr. Des Vœux's charges, through commissioners empowered to take evidence on oath on the spot, I had determined to await, in silence, the Report of that Commission; but having recently learned that there is a desire on the part of several of the planters that I should be examined before the Commission, and being unable, without great inconvenience, to proceed to British Guiana, I have deemed it only just to those who desire my testimony, to make some observations on Mr. Des Vœux's letter, which is calculated to do serious injury to a

colony, in the prosperity of which I shall ever feel [a lively interest. That I do not exaggerate the effect produced by the publication of Mr. Des Vœux's letter, is evident, from the comments on it which I have seen. The *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, states that, "he arraigns the medical men employed "on the estates, the stipendiary magistrates, the clergy in "colonial pay, the sub-immigration agents, and even the late "governor, as sub-servient to the views of the planters, and "opposed to the interest of the immigrants, whom he declares "to have been long treated with gross deception, injustice, "and cruelty." Sir T. W. C. Murdoch, chairman of the Land and Emigration Commissioners, observes in his Report, "Mr. "Des Vœux impugns the conduct of every class in the "colony except the lowest; and imputes to the local government, previous to the assumption of the government by "Mr. Scott, and the magistrates, and medical men, cruel neglect of duty, and unworthy truckling to the planting interest, and to the planters generally, cruelty, falsehood, and "perversion of justice." In Earl Granville's dispatch to Governor Scott, transmitting a copy of Mr. Des Vœux's letter, his Lordship, observes: "Mr. Des Vœux alleges "against the employers, neglect, ill-usage, and mismanagement "of the immigrants, and against those who should enforce "the law for their protection, a general subserviency to the "planters." The gentleman who has preferred the very serious charges, described in the language which I have quoted, was appointed a stipendiary magistrate in British Guiana in the year 1863, and was a resident there, except during short periods of absence on leave, until about the middle of the year 1869, when he was appointed Colonial Secretary of the Island of St. Lucia. During his residence in British Guiana, Mr. Des Vœux abstained from communicating either to the local executive or to the Secretary of State, the facts and opinions, which after a residence of several months in another colony, he at length deemed it his duty to bring to the notice of the Secretary of State. The Commissioners will, I have no doubt, require Mr. Des Vœux to state the "various

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causes" which prevented him, during so many years, from carrying out what he states to have long been his intention; but, in the absence of explanation, I venture to submit, that a public officer who for years conceals from his official superiors such facts and opinions, as are disclosed in Mr. Des Vœux's letter to Earl Granville, is guilty of a grave dereliction of duty. I venture further to submit my reasons for believing that Mr. Des Vœux was influenced in writing his letter to Earl Granville by a feeling of vindictiveness against the planters, and others, who took a prominent part in the impeachment of the late Chief Justice of British Guiana, of whom Mr. Des Vœux was notoriously a zealous partizan. Mr. Des Vœux declares, in paragraph 49, that he had aroused "the enmity of the planting body," and again in paragraph 56, he refers "to the bitter enmity of the planters." He attributes this alleged enmity to his zeal in reforming abuses, and to his upright conduct as a magistrate, but it will be easy to prove, by a reference to dates, that the enmity against the planters, on the part of his friend, Mr. Beaumont, and himself, had no connexion whatever with his decisions as a magistrate, which were given long after the period of the controversy, which culminated in the removal of Mr. Beaumont from the bench.

Those acquainted with the recent history of the colony of British Guiana, are aware that the unfortunate controversy, to which I regret to have again to refer, produced intense bitterness of feeling on both sides. Mr. Des Vœux has had the hardihood to allege that "one of the chief real, though "not ostensible causes of the hatred of the planters for the "late unfortunate Chief Justice," was the Chief Justice's support of a decision of his, in dismissing a complaint made against a female immigrant for not performing tasks when "near her confinement." I can unhesitatingly affirm that such a decision would never have excited enmity on the part of the planters of British Guiana; but, unfortunately for Mr. Des Vœux, his decisions must have been given between February, 1867 and Mr. Beaumont's removal in 1868, while the address for the removal of Mr. Beaumont from the bench,

was adopted in May 1866. It is almost needless to remark that the controversy which eventually led to Mr. Beaumont's removal, had no reference whatever to the subjects discussed in Mr. Des Vœux's letter, or to any subject in which the planters had any special interest. It had, moreover, been carried on between the Executive and the Chief Justice for nearly twelve months before the public were informed of it. Mr. Des Vœux is as well aware of all these facts as I am, and yet, with a full knowledge of the existence of bitter enmity towards the planters on the part of Mr. Beaumont and his partizans, from the beginning of the year 1866, he has ventured, in order to excite prejudice against the planters, to attribute to them a feeling of enmity inspired by the basest motives. I must not be understood as admitting the correctness of the assertion that there was any feeling of enmity on the part of the planters to Mr. Des Vœux. I never heard of any, but it is apparent from his letter, that Mr. Des Vœux himself believed in its existence, and, that he must consequently be looked on as strongly prejudiced against them. I readily admit that even if it should be proved that Mr. Des Vœux has acted under the influence of vindictive motives, great discredit must attach to all those whom he has assailed, unless his charges can be completely refuted. Mr. Des Vœux declares himself ready to produce strong evidence in proof of his facts, and in support of his opinions. I shall have occasion, before closing these remarks, to refer to some of Mr. Des Vœux's alleged facts, but my chief object will be to point out the erroneous inferences which he has conveyed to his readers, and the unjust attacks which he has made on individuals. To support his charge of cruelty, Mr. Des Vœux cites three cases—one, a complaint against a female immigrant for not performing the required number of tasks, and which complaint he dismissed; the others, two cases of complaints against managers for assaults, in both of which he fined them heavily. The inference which Mr. Des Vœux conveys is, that these cases would have been differently decided by other magistrates, and in paragraph 26 he insinuates that the

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Governor was so sub-servient to the planters, that he would be ready to change the district of any magistrate who became obnoxious to them. The facts, whether distorted or not by Mr. Des Vœux, only prove that the law for the protection of the immigrants was rigidly enforced in the cases cited, and I feel assured that it will appear, on enquiry, that there is not the slightest foundation for the inferences drawn from them.

It has never been imagined, I presume, by any intelligent person, that upwards of 40,000 indentured labourers can be subjected to the restraints which the system renders necessary, without occasional acts of oppression on the part of the managers and their subordinates. The precautions taken to prevent the ill-treatment of the immigrant labourers would be unnecessary, if implicit reliance could be placed on the temper and discretion of the employers. I have no doubt whatever that the most serious acts of oppression are committed by subordinate agents, especially by the class known as drivers. A person unacquainted with the colony of British Guiana, could draw no other inference from Mr. Des Vœux's letter, than that acts of oppression were, as a general rule, condoned by the magistrates, by the Immigration Agent General, and by the head of the Government, and that he himself was the only person who had protected the oppressed immigrant labourers. I have no doubt that other magistrates will be examined as to their mode of dealing with complaints, and I feel assured that there are few magistrates in the colony who have not had occasion to punish *employees* on the plantations, for offences against the labourers. I particularly recollect cases in which Mr. Frazer and Mr. Plummer passed severe sentences for such offences, without incurring any enmity from the planters, and I do not hesitate to assert that the imputations against the magistrates, of being under the influence of the planters are wholly unmerited. I appeal to the records of the Immigration Department to prove the promptitude with which every complaint made by immigrant labourers was investigated, and redressed when proved to be well founded.

Mr. Des Vœux has referred, in paragraph 132 of his letter to two public officers, Mr. Crosby, the Immigration Agent General, and Dr. Shier, the Inspector General of Estates Hospitals, as "sufficiently high-minded to speak out what they know," and as "having peculiar means" of acquiring information. Mr. Crosby was at the head of the Immigration Department during the whole period of my government, except when acting as Judge, when Mr. Gallagher, 1st Sub-Immigration Agent, acted in his place. It was Mr. Crosby's duty to make full reports, semi-annually, for transmission to the Secretary of State; and Mr. Des Vœux describes him as "a thoroughly upright, conscientious, and indefatigable public officer." Was Mr. Crosby entirely ignorant that cruelties were being practised on the immigrants without let or hindrance; or, being aware of these abuses, did he conceal the fact of their existence? Dr. Shier also made half-yearly reports on the Estates Hospitals, which were referred to the Immigration Agent General, who again reported on them to the Governor. These reports are all on record, and a reference to them will show that I did not fail to examine them most carefully, and that I gave prompt attention to every complaint. I must observe that, if Mr. Des Vœux's allegations are correct, no one is more censurable than the Immigration Agent General and the Sub-Agents who visit the estates. I have already cited Mr. Des Vœux's opinion of Mr. Crosby, and I have no hesitation in affirming that Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Firth were zealous and humane officers, whose reports will do them credit. Having made the foregoing preliminary observations, I shall proceed to notice such of Mr. Des Vœux's statements as appear deserving of attention. The first subject discussed, is the system under which immigrant labourers are provided with medical attendance and proper comforts in sickness. On this, as on other subjects, it would be inferred from Mr. Des Vœux's letter that he had been vainly endeavouring to introduce remedial measures, and that although the remedy was "simple" he could not get anyone to listen to him. In the 10th paragraph of his letter, he states that he had urged this simple

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remedy "without success on more than one Governor." Mr. Des Vœux was not many months in British Guiana after Governor Scott's assumption of the Government, and what he may have urged on him I have no means of knowing. As he came to British Guiana during my administration, the only other Governor besides myself that he could have urged his views on, was Lieut.-Governor Mundy, who would not have been likely to take up a question of such magnitude during a temporary administration. For myself, I can state distinctly that although the subject was one constantly in my thoughts, and one which I frequently discussed with others, I never even heard of Mr. Des Vœux taking any interest in it. I am certain that he never urged any remedy on me in the very few private conversations which I had with him, and I shall be very much surprised indeed if there is any representation of his on the subject in the records of the departments. There is, throughout Mr. Des Vœux's letter, a want of precision as to facts and dates which I hope will be remedied in the course of the enquiry which is to take place. The persons with whom I discussed the subject from time to time, were the officers of the Immigration Department, the Surgeon General of the Colony, the Inspector General of Estates Hospitals, some of the official and elective members of the Court of Policy, and some of the principal medical practitioners. I cannot, of course, recollect all the conversations that I held on the subject, but Mr. Des Vœux had had no experience whatever of the management of the Estates Hospitals prior to his appointment in February, 1867, to the charge of districts B and C. At that time I was absent from the Colony, to which I returned in September. The important question raised by Mr. Des Vœux had naturally engaged much of the attention of my predecessor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, as it did of mine. Sir Philip Wodehouse was, I believe, favorable to District General Hospitals, but he was unable to carry out his views. Important changes such as those indicated by Mr. Des Vœux cannot be effected without appropriations of money, which require the support of a majority of the members of the com-

bined court, and there was a general indisposition among the elective members to place the Estates Hospitals under the absolute control of the executive so long as the cost was entirely defrayed by the planters. I was frequently met by the argument that, if the Government took the patronage of the medical appointments, they must also assume the entire charge of the Hospitals. The whole subject had been fully discussed long before Mr. Des Vœux's appointment to British Guiana, and the result was a compromise between Governor Wodehouse and the elective members, under which the latter agreed to provide a salary and travelling expenses for an Inspector General of Estates Hospitals to be appointed by the Crown, and who was to visit twice a year every Estate Hospital in the Colony. Mr. Des Vœux admits the integrity, zeal, and independence of the Inspector General, and though my individual opinion is favorable to an alteration of the present system, there are many difficulties in the way of taking the Hospitals into the hands of the Government. I should infer from Mr. Des Vœux's letter that he had given very little consideration to the subject. He makes no reference whatever to the Creole population, which is much more in need of increased medical aid than the immigrants, and yet one of the chief difficulties to be encountered if the Government were to assume the charge of all the hospitals in the Colony, would be the mode of securing the co-operation of the negro villagers, and of obtaining from them the ways and means. I believe that Mr. Des Vœux has very much exaggerated the defects of the present system. No doubt the practice is not uniform. Some hospitals are more liberally managed than others; but it is my conviction that there has been gradual improvement going on, and that there will be a concurrence of testimony among the best informed medical men, that great progress has been made of late years, and that the immigrant labourers are not only better attended to than they were formerly, but that they are much better cared for in British Guiana than they were in their native country, and better than the same class in any other tropical country.

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Mr. Des Vœux has made a general attack on the Stipendiary Magistrates of the Colony as being deficient in education, as having risen from inferior positions, and as being dependant on the planters. I believe the attack to be wholly unmerited, and I am persuaded that the gentlemen who have earned their promotion by valuable services rendered to the Crown in less lucrative and less responsible situations in the Colony, will at least bear comparison with their more fortunate colleagues, who, like Mr. Des Vœux, have, while young and inexperienced, received their first appointments as Stipendiary Magistrates. Mr. Des Vœux has endeavoured to prejudice the Secretary of State against local appointments, and it may therefore be desirable that I should submit some reasons for my opinion that, as a rule, colonial claims should be recognized. In British Guiana, as in other tropical colonies, it is the practice for public officers, as it is for professional gentlemen and planters, to seek occasional changes of climate. This necessitates the making of a number of acting appointments. When the higher-paid functionaries, such as the Government Secretary, Comptroller of Customs, &c., obtain leave, their places have been usually supplied temporarily by Stipendiary Magistrates. So that on those occasions, as well as when Magistrates themselves obtain leave, acting appointments must be made. There has rarely, if ever, been a time, during my experience, when all the twelve Magistrates were engaged in the performance of their duties. The temporary Magistrates are, practically, on probation during these periods. If they fail to give satisfaction, they are quietly dropped; whereas, if they succeed, they will probably be re-employed. Persons of this class obtain, during their temporary incumbency, a knowledge of the local laws and practice, much greater than any inexperienced stranger can possess, and they moreover render services to the Crown, which constitute at least some claim to promotion when fitting opportunities occur. This is the class of officers that it is Mr. Des Vœux's special object to depreciate in paragraphs 21 and 22, and again in 64. I do not believe that it would be found possible to fill the acting

appointments at half-salary from England, and I am persuaded that it would be most injurious to the public service if a rule were laid down that no matter how satisfactorily an Acting Magistrate were to discharge his duties, he would have no claim to promotion on a vacancy. Mr. Des Vœux has referred, in paragraph 26, to the power which the Governor possesses, and which it is obviously necessary that he should possess, of changing the districts of Magistrates when the interests of the public service render such a course necessary. He alleges that "it is generally believed" that these changes have been made for the reason that the particular Magistrates subjected to them were obnoxious to the planters; and in paragraph 27 he expressly states that, "to avoid the loss consequent on possible removal, the Magistrate has an inducement to curry favor with the planters." The imputations against myself in all that Mr. Des Vœux alleges regarding the Magistrates are so serious, and so utterly at variance with truth, that I shall find it necessary to enter into a good deal more detail than I could desire in order to refute them.

A few weeks before I left British Guiana, the twelve Stipendiary Magistrates were (with one exception, Mr. Baird, who retired on superannuation while absent in England) in the Colony. I shall give their names, as far as I can recollect, according to their seniority:—Mr. W. H. Ware, Mr. J. D. Frazer, Mr. Humphreys, Mr. Baird, Mr. John Daly, jun., Mr. Broadhead, Mr. Des Vœux, Mr. Huggins, Mr. Plummer, Mr. Dampier, Mr. Tucker, and Mr. Charles Cox. Of these, the six first named were appointed prior to my assumption of the government. Mr. Ware was never removed from the district in which I found him. Mr. Frazer, after having had for many years charge of an important district (A), was, at his own request, promoted to be Sheriff of Berbice, on the retirement of Mr. McSweeney on superannuation. Mr. John Daly succeeded Mr. Frazer in district A, having been removed, at his own request, from the Demerara West Coast. Mr. Humphreys is still in Essequibo, where I found him. I do not think his district was ever changed during my administration, and

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certainly not without his own concurrence. The same remarks will apply both to Mr. Baird and Mr. Broadhead, both of whom were in districts in Berbice during the whole period of my government. Mr. Huggins was appointed by the Secretary of State from another colony, and was put in charge of the Essequibo Islands, then vacant, from which he was removed to the North coast, at his own request repeatedly made before it was in my power to comply with it. Mr. Plummer was the first Magistrate appointed on my own recommendation. He was an Acting Magistrate when I assumed the Government, and had been so, I think, on more than one previous occasion. On a vacancy occurring, I appointed him provisionally, but he was superseded by Mr. Des Vœux at the time. On the next vacancy his claim was recognized. He has never, I think, been removed, certainly not without his concurrence. Mr. Tucker was in public employment when I arrived in the Colony, and had acted as a Magistrate probably on more than one occasion. On the abolition of the office of Commissary of Taxation which he held, he was employed in another department, and was transferred to the Magistracy in the year 1868. I think he got a better district soon after his appointment at his own desire. Mr. Dampier, when first appointed, was placed on the Essequibo north coast, and was transferred to the Islands by exchange with Mr. Huggins, who had been several years in the Islands, which is one of the least desirable districts, and one which generally falls to the lot of a junior. Mr. Dampier, I may observe, came to the Colony with commendatory letters from the Secretary of State, and was appointed a Superintendent of Rivers and Creeks, and Justice of the Peace, by Governor Wodehouse, an office which he had held for some years before he was promoted to the Stipendiary Magistracy. Mr. Charles Cox came to the Colony from St. Christopher with a strong letter of recommendation to me from Governor Sir Benjamin Pine. He was repeatedly employed to act during temporary vacancies in the Magistracy and other offices, and had well earned his promotion before he obtained it. He was moved about a good deal, owing to his

not having a permanent appointment until very recently. I have now disposed of every case but Mr. Des Vœux's, and I feel assured that my statements will be confirmed by the evidence of such of the gentlemen whom I have named, who are still alive and in the Colony. In no single instance has a magistrate been removed from his district at the instigation of planters, nor has a single appointment been made at the instigation of members of that body. I am persuaded further that no Magistrate ever seriously believed that, by faithfully discharging his duty, he would incur the risk of removal from his district.

I have now to deal with Mr. Des Vœux's "personal experience." On his arrival in the Colony, he was appointed to a district which had generally been assigned to one of the junior Magistrates, which had recently been filled by Mr. Broadhead, who had been transferred to Berbice, I believe, at his own request, about the time of my appointment to British Guiana. I think the arrangement was made or suggested by Lieut-Governor Walker. Mr. Des Vœux almost immediately addressed a letter to the Secretary of State, complaining of the district assigned to him. I think I then intimated to him, as I certainly did subsequently, that, when vacancies occurred, he might expect to get a district that would be more acceptable to him. Mr. Des Vœux, however, after a time, expressed himself quite satisfied to remain where he was. His residence, during his whole term of office until the year 1868, was in the City of Georgetown, which in itself was considered a great advantage. During my absence from the Colony, Mr. Des Vœux, as he relates in paragraph 29, was appointed to take charge of "the most populous and important district in the Colony." He states that this was "a recognition of his public merits." I doubt the accuracy of the statement. It seems at least probable that none of Mr. Des Vœux's seniors would have been desirous of taking temporary charge of Mr. Ware's district during an absence, the duration of which could not have been calculated upon. Mr. Ware was not on a year's leave, but was acting Comptroller of Customs and liable to be

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called on at a moment's notice to return to his magisterial duties. Mr. Des Vœux was a resident in Georgetown, and was able to take Mr. Ware's duties with less inconvenience than anyone else. He alleges in paragraph 41 that he was "removed from the district, at a few days' notice, "a month before the expiration of the leave of the regular "Magistrate;" and that "the public naturally concluded that "the planters had been the cause." When referring to this removal, Mr. Des Vœux should have stated what was done with the Magistrate who was acting in his own district. It seems probable, though I cannot pretend to recollect the circumstances, that it was found convenient to transfer Mr. Des Vœux's *locum tenens* to some other district at the time. There may, however, have been other reasons; for I observe, in a note to paragraph 40, that a complaint had been made against two of Mr. Des Vœux's decisions. I do not recollect the nature of the complaint, but if, as he himself states, he received "a reprimand," then I feel assured that, on an examination of the papers, which must be on record in the Government Secretary's office, it will be found that he deserved it. He admits that he remonstrated against the complaint being referred to him, on the ground that his acts might have been made the subject of legal appeal. The Governor of British Guiana always held that he was the proper judge whether on a complaint being made to him the complainant should be referred to the Court of Appeal, or whether an explanation should be required from the Magistrate, and, as a rule, all such complaints were referred to the Attorney General for report. As the case is cited as one of "pressure," and one in which the complaint was "delayed for "two months," until my return to the Colony, I trust that the facts will be fully investigated. I do not even know who is referred to as one of Mr. Des Vœux's "most determined "and powerful enemies." Mr. Des Vœux states, in paragraph 41, another grievance, which is that he "was again, at a few "days' notice, and without reasons given, and at an expense "of £250," removed to another district, his request for a

month's delay having been refused. Now, Mr. Des Vœux must have been perfectly aware of the reasons for removing some Magistrate to the district referred to, viz. :—the Demerara West Coast (E). That district had long been entrusted to Mr. John Daly, jun., one of the senior Magistrates. I have already noticed that the retirement of Mr. McSweeney, Sheriff of Berbice, early in 1868, led to changes, one of which was Mr. Daly's removal to district A. It is obvious that some Magistrate must have been moved to district E, and, in the exercise of my discretion, I deemed Mr. Des Vœux the proper person to take charge of it. I may observe that some delay occurred in making a permanent arrangement for that district, and that Mr. Charles Cox was in temporary charge of it, pending his confirmation by the Secretary of State. As Mr. Des Vœux has referred to the expense to which he was put, I must remark that, at the time, he was, by permission of the General Commanding, living in the officers' quarters in the barracks near Georgetown, and that the expense must have been to supply furniture for his residence in the new district. No Magistrate in British Guiana enjoyed the same advantages as to residence that Mr. Des Vœux did during the whole period of his service in the Colony. I am yet unaware of a single reason that can be assigned why Mr. Des Vœux should have been allowed either to select his own district, or to choose his own time for removing, while the district would either have been left without a resident Magistrate, or some other Magistrate would have had to suffer the inconvenience and cost of a temporary residence merely to suit Mr. Des Vœux's convenience. It is, however, alleged in a note that, "two days before this "occurred," Mr. Des Vœux had declined to disclose officially a private conversation which occurred at his own table. The inference is obvious that Mr. Des Vœux's selection was owing to private reasons. I earnestly hope that this imputation will be fully investigated. I have not the most remote idea of the matter referred to, and it is, therefore, out of my power to do more than deny most emphatically the correctness of the

inference.
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inference. Under the head of "personal experience," Mr. Des Vœux has referred, in paragraph 40, to the removal of a clerk. This case, like many others, affords an illustration of Mr. Des Vœux's tendency to view every question entirely with reference to himself and to his own personal convenience. The fact is that Mr. Yewens, clerk of the district in which Mr. Des Vœux was acting temporarily, was on a leave of absence, which was very shortly to expire. The *locum tenens* who "had been educated after great trouble," by Mr. Des Vœux, had been strongly recommended to me for promotion by the Inspector General of Police in whose force he had served. A vacancy occurred in the County of Essequibo, which, in the public interest, and on a report of the Auditor General, it was absolutely necessary to fill without delay. I selected the individual who had been a mere acting clerk, and who would have lost his acting appointment in a few weeks for the permanent office, and I did not comply with Mr. Des Vœux's request, urged with a good deal of pertinacity, to sacrifice the public interest to his convenience. I appointed, as Acting Clerk, a young gentleman, who of course, had no acquaintance with the routine of a Magistrate's office, but who was otherwise as competent as any other new clerk.

There are a few other personal references to myself in Mr. Des Vœux's letter; but as they have no bearing on the general question of immigration, I shall abstain from comment on them unless called on for explanation on any point by the Secretary of State.

I have some hesitation in noticing Mr. Des Vœux's remarks on the subject of the mode of defraying the cost of introducing immigrant labourers. Long before Mr. Des Vœux came to the West Indies, and at a time when the question might fairly have been considered an open one, especially in the Windward Island Colonies, with which I was then connected, I had advocated the propriety of throwing the whole cost on the planters. This was the policy advocated by those in England, who have always been the special protectors of the labouring classes. It is well known that the planters, on the other

hand, insisted, during a considerable period, on having the entire cost defrayed from the general revenue. After an exhaustive discussion, the late Duke of Newcastle decided that the planters should pay two-thirds, and the general revenue one-third, of the entire cost, including establishments and back passages. It was my duty to bow to the decision arrived at by my official superior, but I am bound to admit that after a careful consideration of the arguments by which that decision was supported, I became convinced that it was a wise one. It was at the time generally accepted by both parties to the controversy, and I cannot but regret that the question has been re-opened, as I perceive that it has, from a perusal of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. I should not infer from Mr. Des Vœux's remarks that he had given any serious thought to the subject. He seems wholly unacquainted with the reasons on which the Duke of Newcastle based his decision; and in ignorance of those reasons he admits, in paragraph 96, that it was "fair enough," that at first one-third of the cost should be paid by the colony. It so happens that the reason given by the Duke of Newcastle for affording relief to the planters, exists in much greater force at present than it did at the time when His Grace's decision was announced. That reason was, that the Imperial and Indian Governments had found it necessary to impose onerous conditions on immigration, to many of which foreigners, with whom our planters have to compete, were not subjected. I need not refer to all these conditions, imposed no doubt, in the interest of humanity, but many of which would be open to objection, and would lead to much controversy, if the whole cost were thrown on the planters. I may point out that, of late years, the number of passengers which an immigrant ship may carry has been considerably reduced; the food and medical comforts have been improved, and new regulations involving increased cost have been adopted by the Indian Government. The consequence has been that the cost of immigration has materially increased; and though I am writing without the means of referring to figures, I do not hesitate to state my conviction that the

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planters are now paying nearly, if not quite, as much for their immigrants as the entire cost would have been twelve years ago. This is a subject on which I might enlarge, but I believe that the foregoing remarks will sufficiently indicate the grounds on which I deprecate the revival of controversy on the mode of defraying the cost of immigration. That cost is sufficiently high to prevent the planters from making applications in excess of their actual wants.

Mr. Des Vœux has attempted to answer what he terms "the plausible arguments" of the planters in proof of the well-being of the immigrants, viz. :—1st. The large number who voluntarily enter into new indentures ; 2nd. The reduced death rate ; 3rd. The large sums saved by the immigrants. In paragraph 108 he alleges that "very few of the stronger and more provident, who have saved any considerable sum of money, can be induced to re-indenture, except on estates where the treatment is generally known to be good." It is, of course, highly probable that immigrant labourers, who have saved considerable sums of money, may object to re-indenture. Many of that class find it more profitable to keep milch cows and other stock, and to reside in town ; but I feel assured that on examination of the records of the Immigration Department it will be found that the rule is for immigrants to re-indenture. And if this be true, it proves that the treatment generally cannot be bad. Even Mr. Des Vœux admits that there are estates on which the laborers are well treated, and as the bounty which he describes as an overpowering temptation, is paid on all alike, it is most improbable that labourers would stay on estates on which they were badly treated. With regard to the reduced death-rate, Mr. Des Vœux has to admit, notwithstanding his previous attack on all the arrangements for the medical care of the immigrants, that the Inspector General of Estates Hospitals has "forced sanitary measures upon the estates." That valuable officer will, I think, admit that, as a rule, the British Guiana proprietors have been ready to adopt his advice, and to carry out, at considerable cost, the improvements which he has from time to time sug-

gested. Much, no doubt, remains to be done ; but I contend that improvements of every kind have made rapid progress on the estates generally ; and if this statement be correct, then Mr. Des Vœux's letter is calculated to mislead. Mr. Des Vœux is of opinion that the large savings of the Indian labourers is no proof of their prosperity, but rather an indication of their "penurious habits." No doubt an Indian labourer is accustomed to a much more "meagre diet" than a Negro or a Chinaman, but if he had higher wages he would not live any better.

Mr. Des Vœux has referred to me as having obtained a popularity among planters, by my administration and legislation, with a view to lessen the value of my opinion, which he justly anticipated would be very different from his own. A reference to the correspondence with the Secretary of State and to the debates in the Court of Policy would prove that, on many occasions, I differed in opinion with the planters on matters affecting their interests. I hope and believe, however, that they gave me credit for supporting those views which I thought to be right. The legislation was carefully considered by the Land and Emigration Commissioners in England, and finally approved by the Secretary of State. As to my administration of immigration matters I need only remark that when any specific charge is made I shall be ready to meet it, and I have no doubt that the records of the Government Secretary's office and of the Immigration Department will furnish evidence on anypoint that may be raised. The opinion of Sir Philip Wodehouse is desired by Mr. Des Vœux, who is confident that he would allow the possibility and even, perhaps, the probability of the truth of his statement. I am equally confident that neither Sir P. Wodehouse nor the Bishop of Guiana, who is likewise appealed to, would make any such admission. The medical system has not been altered in the points on which Mr. Des Vœux has arraigned it, since Sir Philip Wodehouse administered the Government. Many improvements, in details, were introduced in the Consolidated Immigration Ordinance of 1864 ; and Mr. Des Vœux admits the fact of sanitary

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reforms having been effected. Several of the magistrates who are arraigned by Mr. Des Vœux, were appointed by Sir Philip Wodehouse. As I had constant intercourse with the Bishop of Guiana during my government of British Guiana, and as he never communicated to me that he believed that the immigrants had long been treated "with gross deception, injustice, and cruelty," I feel assured that his Lordship did not entertain such a belief. I readily admit that all the authorities appealed to by Mr. Des Vœux are deserving of the highest credit, but I cannot believe that they will express different views from mine on the subjects discussed in Mr. Des Vœux's letter.

